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Cornell student earns Nelson Shaulis scholarship

By Joe Ogrodnick


Misha Kwasniewski

Misha Kwasniewski, a student researching factors that affect the flavors and aromas of wines under viticulturist Justine Vanden Heuvel at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, recently received the 2008 Nelson Shaulis Award.

Established in 1978 by longtime Cornell viticulturist Nelson J. Shaulis, the scholarship enables students to work directly with grape research and extension faculty in order to encourage them to consider a viticulture career.

"It's a great honor to receive a scholarship in honor of Nelson Shaulis who did so much for the grape industry in this state. It has been an amazing experience to get to learn from so many people at Cornell involved in viticulture and enology research," Kwasniewski said. "This scholarship has allowed for a truly unique experience that has solidified my interest in research and pursuing grad school. It is an exciting time to be involved with viticulture in New York State, and I am pleased be part of it."

At Geneva, Kwasniewski has studied how the timing of leaf removal influences the flavors and aromas of riesling grapes. He also plans to examine grape phylloxera, a pest that feeds on grapevine roots.

"Misha is a bright, enthusiastic student, and it's a pleasure to have him as a member of our research group," Vanden Heuvel said.

During his extensive career, Shaulis researched factors related to siting vineyards, grapevine physiology, vineyard mechanization and management, mineral nutrition, rootstocks, and canopy microclimates. He was an expert in defining attributes of site, growth, canopy, and crop in vineyard management.

His ideas have had a profound effect on the grape industry. He helped create a training system for grapes called the Geneva Double Curtain. The system effectively doubles the cordon length per acre of vineyard and is used to train vines of certain vigorous varieties of grapes used for processing. Along with researchers in Cornell's department of agricultural engineering, Shaulis developed the mechanical grape harvester. Today, harvesters patterned after this design are used to harvest virtually all the commercial grapes grown in New York and many other locales.

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